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ATTITUDE OF HIGH SCHOOL CONTENT AREA TEACHERS TOWARD THE TEACHING OF READING.

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TO DETERMINE THE ATTITUDES OF CONTENT AREA TEACHERS TOWARD READING INSTRUCTION, THE RESPONSES TO A CHECKLIST OF 20 PRACTICES RELATED TO READING IN THE CONTENT AREAS WERE COLLECTED FROM 585 JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH TEACHERS REPRESENTING SEVEN CONTENT AREAS. THE RESPONSES TO FIVE ITEMS ON THE CHECKLIST INDICATED, GENERALLY, (1) THAT TEACHERS FELT TEXTBOOK MATERIALS WERE SUITED TO THE READING LEVEL OF STUDENTS, (2) THAT TEACHERS GROUPED FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION, (3) THAT THEY KNEW THE READING LEVEL OF TEXTBOOKS USED, (4) THAT THEY KNEW THE READING SKILLS NEEDED IN THEIR AREAS, AND (5) THAT THEY DID NOT PROVIDE OTHER READING MATERIALS FOR NONREADERS. WHEN THE RESPONSES OF FEMALE TEACHERS, MALE TEACHERS, AND PRINCIPALS WERE COMPARED, VARIATIONS AND INCONSISTENCIES WERE NOTED. FEMALE TEACHERS FELT THAT THEY ALMOST ALWAYS SUITED TEXTBOOK MATERIALS TO THE LEVEL OF STUDENTS AND THAT THEY TAUGHT THE NEEDED READING SKILLS ALMOST ALWAYS ADEQUATELY. MALE TEACHERS WERE LESS POSITIVE THAT MATERIALS WERE SUITED TO THE LEVEL OF STUDENTS AND FELT THAT THEY TAUGHT THE NEEDED READING SKILLS ADEQUATELY SOMETIMES. THE PRINCIPALS, HOWEVER, FELT THAT THE TEACHERS DID NOT ADAPT MATERIALS TO THE LEVEL OF STUDENTS AND THAT THEY DID NOT TEACH NEEDED READING SKILLS AS ADEQUATELY AS THEY CLAIMED. A COPY OF THE CHECKLIST IS INCLUDED. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL READING CONFERENCE (TAMPA, NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 2, 1967). (NS)

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Attitude of High School Content Area Teachers Toward the Teaching of Reading

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The teaching of reading skills in the secondary schools is an educational trend that is receiving increasing emphasis. There seems to be an ever greater demand for trained teachers to develop and teach such programs. Several approaches have been made by secondary school to initiate programs. The most common approach used is to make the teaching of reading skills an integral part of the English curriculum. Although this appears to be the most common pattern, the most desirable organization would be to have all the subject matter teachers teaching the skills pertinent to their own teaching area.

The major problem in developing a reading program in the secondary school is to enlist the aid of the content area teachers. Even when the teachers are willing to admit the needs for such a program, they are sometimes hesitant to learn anything about the techniques needed to improve the skills. Many of them feel that they just don't have the time to teach both the content and the necessary reading skills. It is possible that some teachers feel they are doing an adequate job of teaching the needed reading skills and therefore, see no need for change.

In a study done by Olson and Rosen (1967-68) with the same population of teachers and their principals, as discussed in this paper, the following was found.

1. Female teachers feel they almost always used textbook materials suited to the reading levels of the students. Male teachers feel they did a good job of this but were less positive that they almost always used appropriate materials. The principals felt that the teachers did a much less effective job in suiting the reading material to the reading levels of the students than the teachers indicated they were doing.

2. Over half of the female teachers felt they taught the reading skills needed for their content area adequately almost always while the male teachers indicated that they taught them adequately less frequently. The principals felt that the teachers did not do as adequate a job as they said they were doing.

Perhaps of more interest than the differences between the responses of the teachers and the teachers and principals were the contradictions between responses.

Procedure

The author, in order to evaluate the extent to which teachers felt they were teaching some aspects of reading skill development collected the responses of junior and senior high school teachers (N=585) to a checklist involving their practices relating to reading. In the teachers responses there were seven content areas represented; English (N=146), Social Studies (N=123), Science (N=102), Mathematics (N=108), Business (N=33), Vocational (N=49) and Foreign Language (N=24).

The teachers were given a list of twenty practices relating to reading in the content areas (see appendix A) and asked to put a check in the column which best described their own classroom practice. They were to check column one if they almost always carried on the practice, column two if they carried it on most of the time, column three if they carried it on sometimes and column four if they seldom or never perscribed to the practice.

Analysis of the data

Tables 1-5 show five of the items on the twenty item survey that are most pertinent to this report. The five items shown were significant at the .01 level. The complete data for each of the twenty items may be obtained from the author.

Table 1

Percent of Teacher Response to Item # 1*

	Almost Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
English	89.7	10.3	———	———
Social Studies	84.6	15.4	———	———
Science	82.4	14.7	2.9	———
Mathematics	89.8	9.3	.9	———
Business	90.9	9.1	———	———
Vocational	81.6	18.4	———	———
Foreign Lang.	62.5	20.8	———	16.9

* Item # 1. Text materials are suited in difficulty to the reading levels of students. (X^2 = 111.51)

Table 2

Percent of Teacher Response to Item # 7 *

	Almost Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
English	39.7	39.7	15.8	4.8
Social Studies	18.7	32.5	38.2	10.6
Science	22.5	31.4	25.5	20.6
Mathematics	25.2	37.4	25.2	12.1
Business	33.3	27.3	24.2	15.2
Vocational	16.3	26.5	36.7	20.4
Foreign Lang.	54.2	29.2	———	16.7

* Item # 7. The teacher knows the special reading skills in the subject. (X^2 = 61.86)

Table 3

Percent of Teacher Response to Item # 17*

	Almost Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
English	16.4	26.7	39.0	17.8
Social Studies	11.4	20.3	42.3	26.0
Science	13.7	15.7	42.2	28.4
Mathematics	2.8	15.0	44.9	37.4
Business	6.1	15.2	30.3	48.5
Vocational	4.1	32.7	32.7	30.6
Foreign Lang.	4.2	20.8	20.8	54.2

*Item #17. Readings from various textbooks are provided for those who cannot read the regular text. (X^2 = 48.40)

Table 4

Percent of Teacher Response to Item # 18*

	Almost Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
English	56.8	30.8	12.3	———
Social Studies	45.5	39.8	14.6	———
Science	43.1	33.3	18.6	4.9
Mathematics	37.4	49.5	10.3	2.8
Business	30.3	33.3	18.2	18.2
Vocational	30.6	51.0	14.3	4.1
Foreign Lang.	54.2	37.5	8.3	———

*Item # 18. Students are grouped within the classroom for differentiated instruction. (X^2 = 61.68)

Table 5

Percent of Teacher Response to Item # 19*

	Almost Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
English	69.9	26.7	.7	2.7
Social Studies	53.7	36.6	8.9	.8
Science	55.9	31.4	6.9	.9
Mathematics	48.6	43.9	5.6	1.9
Business	54.5	15.2	15.2	15.2
Vocational	51.0	32.7	10.2	6.1
Foreign Lang.	58.3	25.0	12.5	4.2

*Item # 19. The teacher knows the reading level of the textbook(s) being used. ($X^2 = 48.69$)

Table 1 shows that all but one (foreign language) group of teachers felt that they almost always suited the reading difficulty to the reading level of the students. The response of the foreign language teachers is not surprising since they are working with a select group of students. Except for the language teachers the vocational teachers indicated that they provided material to a lesser degree than other teachers.

Table 2 shows that 57.1 percent of the vocational teachers felt that they knew the reading skills needed for their subject sometimes or seldom/never. The social studies teachers, 48.8 percent, responded in the same way. All of the content area teachers showed a wide variation in their responses.

Table 3 shows that the majority of the teachers only sometimes or seldom/never provided other reading materials for those who could not read the regular textbook assigned to the course.

Table 4 shows that the majority of the teachers felt that they did an adequate job of grouping for differentiated instruction. The foreign

language teachers indicated that they grouped almost always or most of the time (91.7 percent). The English and social studies teachers respond in the same way, 87.6 percent and 85.3 percent respectively.

Table 5 shows that the vast majority of the content area teachers felt that they knew the reading level of the textbook(s) they were using almost always. The business training teachers had more variation than any other group.

Other items that showed a significant difference (.01 level) in the responses of the seven groups of teachers were: 2,4,5,6,8,11,12, and 15.

Conclusions and Discussion

The results of this study seems to indicate that the teachers generally feel that text materials are suited in difficulty to the reading level of the students, group for differentiated instruction, know the reading levels of the textbooks they use, and know the special reading skills of their content area. They indicated that they generally did not provide other reading materials for those who could not read the textbook. In most of the items evaluated however, there was an indication of wide variation in responses for teachers within the same content area and between content areas.

Further evaluation of all the twenty items indicates a number of inconsistencies in the responses of the teachers. An example of one inconsistency can be found by comparing the responses on items one and seventeen. It appears that the teachers are saying that the reading materials are almost always suited to the reading level of the students but for those who can not read it little or no provision is made. If we couple this with the information from item nineteen it appears that the teachers are not as sure about the reading level of the materials they use. The question could be asked, Is it possible to say that we always provide text material suited in difficulty

to the reading levels of students and at the same time say we don't provide other textbooks for those who cannot read the regular text? It is of interest to note that when the teachers were asked how they knew the reading level of the text, most of them responded that they got this information from the grade level for which the publisher said the text was appropriate.

Bibliography

Olson, A. and Rosen C. An analysis of teacher-principal responses to practices related to reading in the secondary school. Reading Improvement, Winter 1967/68.

Appendix A

PRACTICES RELATED TO READING IN THE CONTENT AREAS

Teacher's Name:_____Subject Taught:_____

The twenty practices listed below often are recommended in teaching effectively the special reading skills in the various content areas. Indicate the extent to which this practice applies to your classes. Draw a line around the number that indicates the appropriate response from among the following four:

1 - Almost always 3 - Sometimes

2 - Most of the time 4 - Seldom or never

1. Text material used is suited in difficulty to the reading levels of students.	1 2 3 4
2. Students are encourage through assignments to read widely in related materials.	1 2 3 4
3. At the beginning of the year, adequate time is taken to intoduce the text and to discuss how it may be read effectively.	1 2 3 4
4. The teacher is aware of the special vocabulary and concepts introduced in the various units.	1 2 3 4
5. Adequate attention is given to vocabulary and concept development.	1 2 3 4
6. Provisions are made for checking on extent to which important vocabulary and concepts are learned, and re-teaching is done where needed.	1 2 3 4
7. The teacher knows the special reading skills involved in the subject.	1 2 3 4
8. The teacher teaches adequately the special reading skills in the subject.	1 2 3 4
9. The course content is broader in scope than a single textbook.	1 2 3 4
10. Assignments are made clearly and concisely.	1 2 3 4
11. Students are taught to use appropriate reference materials.	1 2 3 4
12. Adequate reference materials are available.	1 2 3 4
13. Plenty of related informational books and other materials are available for students who read <u>below-grade</u> level.	1 2 3 4

14. Plenty of related informational books and other materials are available for students who read <u>above-grade</u> level. 1 2 3 4

15. The teacher takes advantage of opportunities that may arise to encourage students to read recreational as well as informational reading matter. 1 2 3 4

16. The teacher helps the poor reader to develop adequate reading skills. 1 2 3 4

17. Readings from various textbooks are provided for those who cannot read the regular text. 1 2 3 4

18. Students are grouped within the classroom for differentiated instruction. 1 2 3 4

19. The teacher knows the reading level of the textbook(s) being used. 1 2 3 4

20. The teacher knows the reading ability of the students from standardized tests, other evaluative materials, and/ or cumulative records. 1 2 3 4